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ABSTRACT

The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) is an Austin, Texas alternative education program for high-risk students. It employs three project specialists to work with high-risk and delinquent students at two locations, Rice secondary school and a juvenile detention center. Most of the students are referred for disciplinary reasons. Students in grades 6-12 are housed together. Awards assemblies are held at the end of each 6-week grading period. Faculty and staff are encouraged to informally "adopt" students. Homework is assigned three times a week. Evaluation of the program indicated that: (1) most Rice students were more confident about staying in school through graduation; (2) a followup of Rice students 1 year after exit showed that 40 percent had dropped out and 40 percent were attending their home schools; (3) most of the Rice students were from low income families; (4) faculty turnover at Rice was high, a situation which may be related to the lack of salary incentives and special training; (5) gang membership emerged as a problem at Rice and the juvenile detention center; (6) the student teacher ratio at the juvenile detention center was 17:1; and (7) the recidivism rate for the juvenile detention center was 71 percent entered for the first time, 21 percent for the second time, and 8 percent for the third through seventh time. (ABL)

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CG 021914

The School-Community Guidance Center

Alternative Education for High-Risk Students

1988-89

Austin Independent School District
Austin, Texas

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY GUIDANCE CENTER:
AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR HIGH-RISK STUDENTS
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AUTHORS: Lesley Anne Swanson, Nancy R. Baenen

Program Description

Funded by a $100,000 grant from the Texas Education Agency, the School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) employed three Project Specialists to work with high-risk and delinquent students at two locations: AISD's F.R. Rice Secondary School and Travis County's Gardner House, the Juvenile Detention Center. SCGC was designed to help these high-risk students improve in the areas of school attendance, academic achievement, disruptive behavior, and contacts with the court system.

Major Findings

1. Three fourths of Rice students surveyed are more confident about staying in school through graduation now that they have been at Rice. (Page 18)

2. A follow-up study of 1,284 Rice students one year after exit showed the same percentage of students had dropped out (507, 40%) as were attending their home school (508, 40%). Recidivists accounted for 12%, and transfers 8%. (Page 26)

3. About 7 out of 10 Rice students are from low income families, compared with a District average of 3 out of 10. The higher referral rates for minorities seem related to their greater likelihood of low-income status. (Page 4)

4. Faculty turnover is high (47%) at Rice. This may be related to the fact that faculty assigned to Rice receive neither salary incentives nor special training on how to: 1) deal effectively with the disruptive, high-risk students assigned to their classes, or 2) cope with the high-stress environment. (Page 11)

5. Project Specialists report that gang membership has emerged this year as a problem to be reckoned with both at Gardner House and at Rice. Increases were observed in the percentage of students referred for weapons offenses and vandalism. Discipline referrals for insubordination also rose; 42% of Rice students were referred for this reason. (Pages 8 and 12)

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SCGC deals with troubled youth. AISD is attempting to meet their needs at Rice and Gardner House with AISD- and SCGC-funded staff. A year of working with SCGC statistics and visiting staff and classes on campus leads to the following conclusions and suggestions for readers' consideration.

Teaching and counseling students deemed delinquent and high-risk are exceptionally stressful. At Rice, faculty turnover (47%) and burnout are pressing issues that need to be addressed, yet neither salary nor career incentives are offered to faculty there. At Gardner House, where enrollment fluctuates on a daily basis, the Project Specialist faces a new class virtually every day. The environment is much like that of a one-room schoolhouse, with students ages 10-17 enrolled in grades 4-12. Needs and abilities of these students vary enormously, making lesson planning difficult.

In addition to problems associated with the sheer diversity of the population served, the average daily student-teacher ratio at Gardner House (17:1) exceeded the state-recommended limits (10:1) for juvenile detention centers. Next year, enrollment will likely jump sharply as high-risk offenders who were sent elsewhere during 1988-89 (for security reasons) return to the program when the new detention center opens this summer. Assignment of a second teacher to Gardner House would enhance both lesson planning and supervision.

Students served by SCGC are a population at high risk of dropping out. A one-year follow-up study of 1,284 Rice students showed that the dropout rate at Rice is 4%, and a year later this figure has escalated to 40%. Results of the 1988-89 student survey indicate that 75% of the students surveyed are more inclined to remain in school and graduate now that they have been at Rice, but the follow-up statistics do not reflect a subsequent change in their behavior to match this attitude.

Returning to their home schools likely weakens the students' determination reflected in this survey response. Although 71% reported they did not want to remain at Rice, the supports available to them at Rice -- frequent, daily contact with counselors; a low student-teacher ratio; a small student body; an unrelenting focus on academics and behavior -- are less available elsewhere. Recidivism over a one-year period averages 12%. Together, recidivists and dropouts account for one in two (52%) of the students a year

later. TEAMS skills of these students are poor; 45% of Rice seventh and ninth graders taking TEAMS this year failed all three subtests. Ways of addressing these issues might include:

- Strengthening home-school supports for these returning students, utilizing either Rice or home-school counselors.
- Providing a continuing alternative educational environment beyond a one-semester assignment to Rice.
- Stronger focus on skills tested on Exit-level TEAMS (which must be passed to graduate).

For the 1989-90 school year, it had been proposed that the alternative school program now at Rice be moved back to the Read campus, which housed the alternative middle school in 1987-88. While the decision was not to use Read, several problems encountered at Read last year are worth consideration in selecting a new site.

Numerous student management problems arose that year because of the nature and location of the campus. Designed as an elementary school, Read has an unusual design. Instead of an interior hallway between classrooms, Read has interconnecting classrooms that each open to the outside. In many rooms, moveable accordion-style partitions--between classrooms--serve as classroom walls. Often, doors have no locks. Because many of the interior walls and doors are folding partitions, noise is always a concern. In order to change classes, students exit to the outside, where jutting walls provide many places to hide. In addition, many students found its location--near a large shopping mall--a temptation, so truancy was a constant concern (Frazer, 1988). Monitoring and managing student behavior under these circumstances proved extremely difficult a year ago, and could be even more so with a larger number of students from both the middle and high school levels. Last year, it proved necessary to hire a hall monitor to patrol the building. If a similar site were selected, two monitors might be desirable.

Another alternative worth consideration is to have a small alternative center at each secondary school or to find cluster schools which could take students from a wider area. This could decrease problems of gangs and lessen adjustment problems caused by changing schools (perhaps reducing the dropout rate).

AISD's alternative school needs a permanent name. In the past, it has assumed the name of the campus where it was based, but this location has changed from year to year. Project Intercept (an alternative program in New York) is one name worth considering.

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY GUIDANCE CENTER: AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR HIGH-RISK STUDENTS

The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) program was established in November, 1984, to serve high-risk AISD students removed from their home campuses:

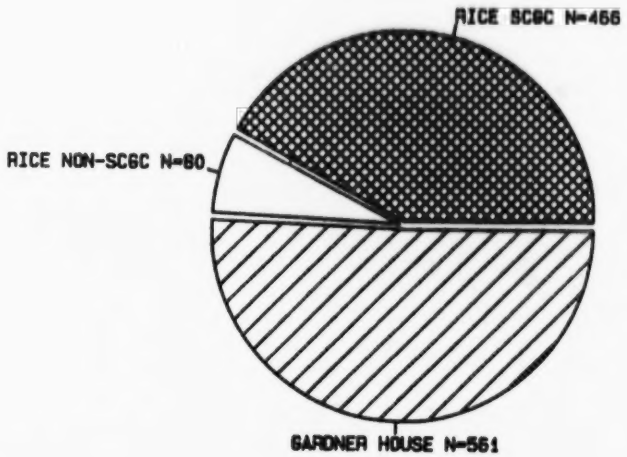
- By the District subsequent to disciplinary action,
- By juvenile justice authorities as a condition of probation,
- By juvenile justice authorities for purposes of judicial detention.

The SCGC program funds three Project Specialists to work with students during the regular school year. Two of them are assigned to the alternative education program at Rice secondary school, and the third works on site at Gardner House, the Travis County juvenile detention center. Part-time Project Specialists are employed during the summer session. This report will focus on four aspects of the program: 1) Rice and Gardner House, 2) Project Specialists, 3) participants, and 4) program follow-up.

SCGC ENROLLMENT

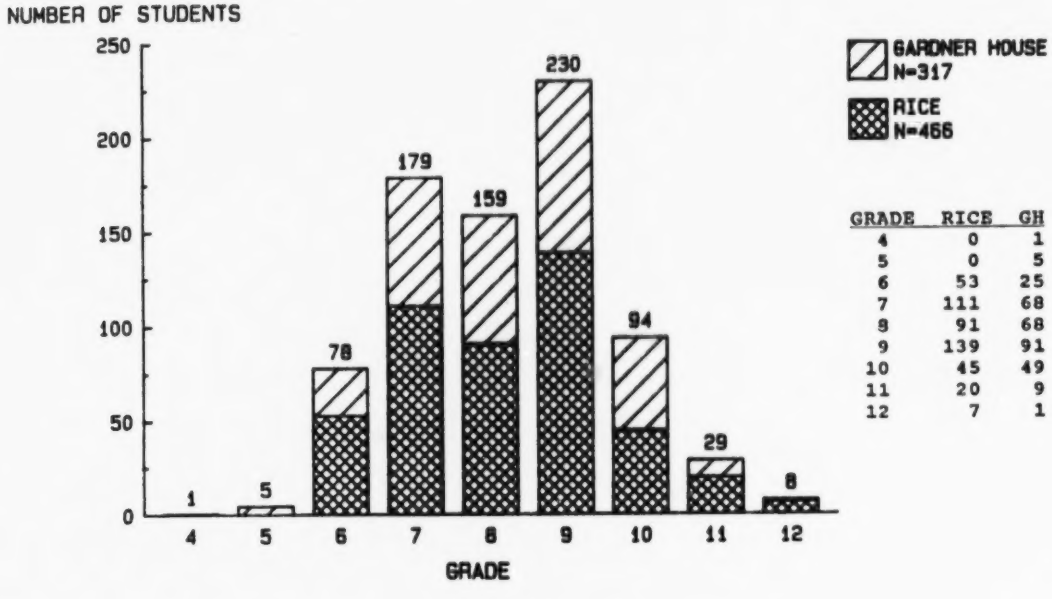
Figures 1, 2, and 3 show total program enrollment (N=1,027) by location, grade, and gender.

FIGURE 1
SCGC Enrollment by Location, 1988-89



Students in grades 6-12 may be assigned to Rice at any time during the semester. Assignment is typically for the duration of the semester of referral. Students who enroll during the last six weeks of a semester, however, usually stay for the entire following semester. Gardner House enrolls juveniles regardless of grade level or district.

FIGURE 2
SCGC Enrollment by Grade (AISD only), 1988-89



GRADE	RICE	GH
4	0	1
5	0	5
6	53	25
7	111	68
8	91	68
9	139	91
10	45	49
11	20	9
12	7	1

FIGURE 3
SCGC Enrollment by Gender

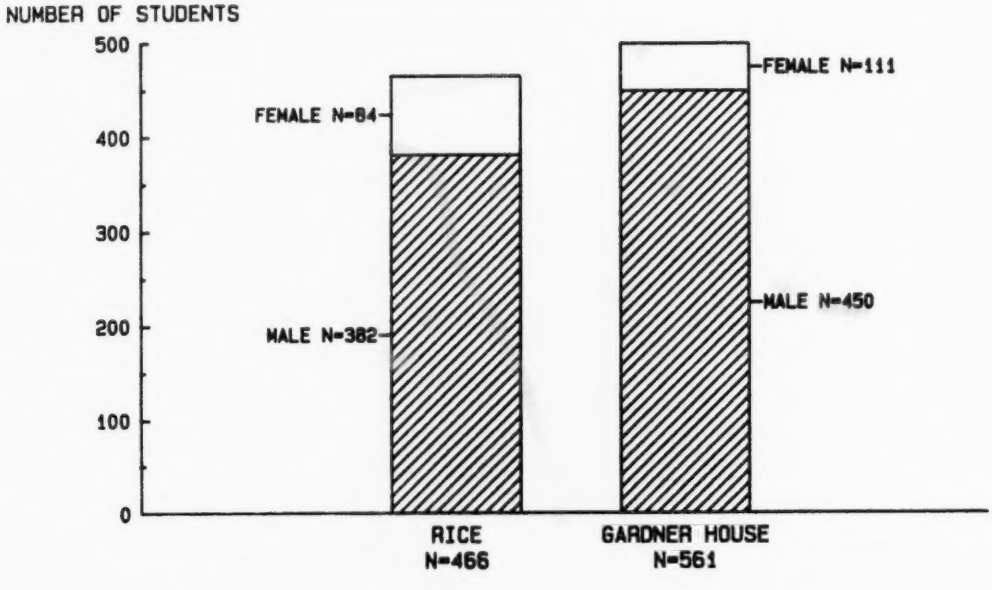
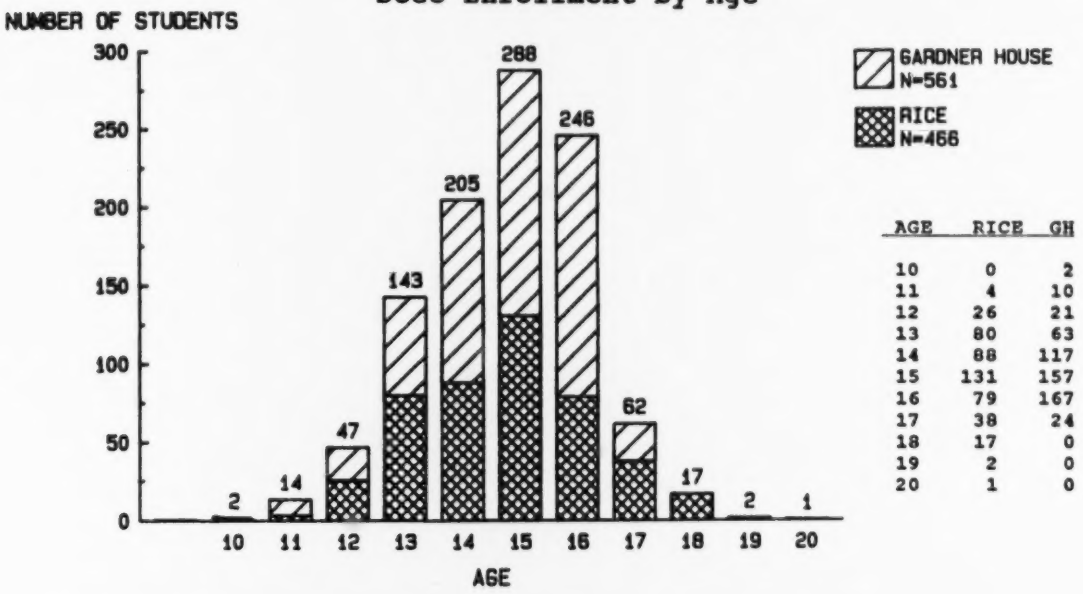


Figure 4 shows SCGC enrollment by age; clearly, students 14-16 years of age are most likely to be referred. After age 16, many high-risk students drop out. This trend is reflected in the low referral rates for older students.

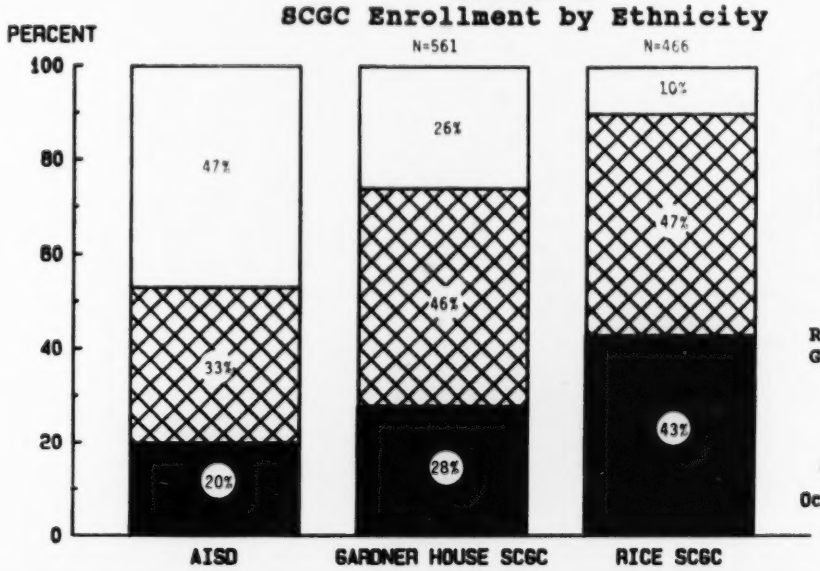
FIGURE 4
SCGC Enrollment by Age



AGE	RICE	GH
10	0	2
11	4	10
12	26	21
13	80	63
14	88	117
15	131	157
16	79	167
17	38	24
18	17	0
19	2	0
20	1	0

SCGC enrolls a disproportionate number of minority students compared with the District as a whole (see Figure 5). The percentage of Hispanic students is about the same at both Rice and Gardner House, but the percentage of Blacks is greater at Rice than at Gardner House. The percentage of Blacks referred to Rice is more than twice the percentage of Blacks districtwide.

FIGURE 5
SCGC Enrollment by Ethnicity



	B	H	O
RICE	200	218	48
GH	156	260	145

AISD totals as of October 14, 1988.

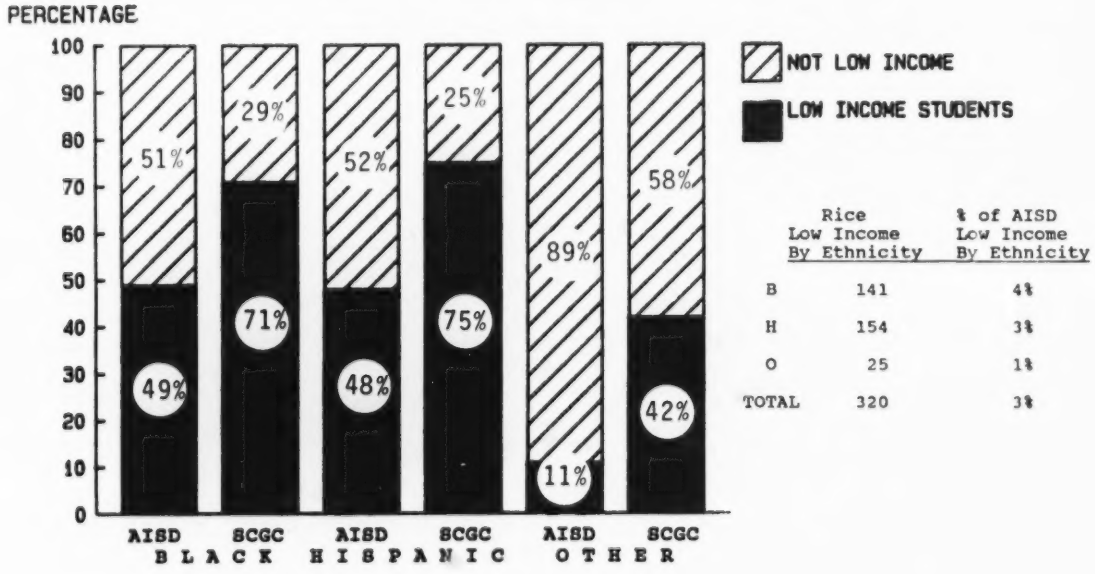
About 7 out of 10 SCGC students at Rice are low income, compared to about 3 out of 10 districtwide in the same grades. Students are considered low income if they or their siblings qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

	AISD Low Income		SCGC (Rice) Low Income	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Black	3,184	3,308	141	57
Hispanic	4,674	5,108	154	52
Other	1,782	14,168	25	34
TOTAL	9,640	22,584	*320	143
	30%	**70%**	**69%**	**31%**

* N=3 unknown

Within all ethnic groups, low-income students are more likely to be referred to SCGC at Rice than students who are not low income. Referral rates as a percentage of low income AISD students within each ethnicity ranged from 1% to 4%. Being from a low-income family has a disproportionately high correlation with referral to Rice. In other words, 3% of all AISD low-income students are referred to Rice, compared to 0.06% of all who are not low income (see Figure 6).

FIGURE 6
AISD vs. SCGC (Rice) Low-Income Students By Ethnicity, Grades 6-12



	Rice Low Income By Ethnicity	% of AISD Low Income By Ethnicity
B	141	4%
H	154	3%
O	25	1%
TOTAL	320	3%

PROJECT SPECIALISTS

JOB DESCRIPTION

Project Specialists are the heart of the SCGC program. They assist students to:

- Improve school attendance,
- Improve academic performance,
- Decrease disruptive behavior,
- Decrease contact with the juvenile justice system,
- Obtain vocational information,
- Develop good citizenship skills.

New Student Orientation. Parental approval of the referral is prerequisite to enrollment, and every effort is made to enlist parents' continuing support for the program. Two days each week are set aside for new student enrollment; parents must appear with their children at that time to learn about the school's procedures and philosophy. Project Specialists then meet with new students in orientation sessions to review the F.R. Rice Student Handbook in detail; students must both understand and agree to abide by the rules. Information from various questionnaires assists the Project Specialists in establishing individual behavior management plans and academic goals for each student's stay at Rice. The Project Specialists then work with classroom teachers to implement these plans and goals. Achievement tests are also administered at this time as needed for placement purposes. Project Specialists create class schedules for each of their assigned students.

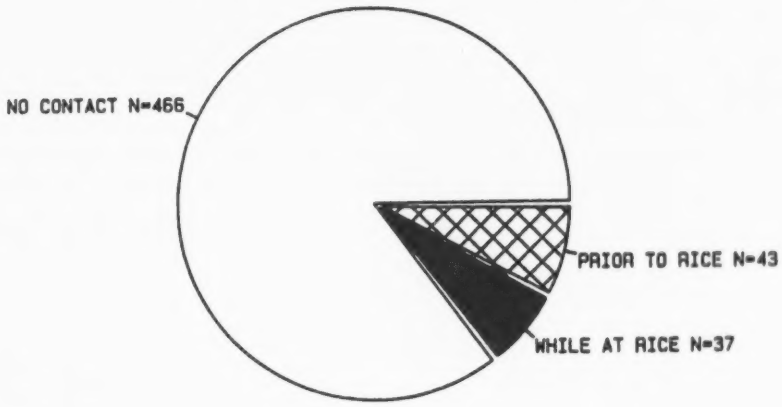
Attendance. Monitoring student attendance is a time-consuming but vital part of the SCGC program. Project Specialists are responsible for making daily telephone calls to the parents of students who are absent. Through regular checks with classroom teachers, the Project Specialists work to improve attendance, and they provide assistance to students and parents as appropriate. Coordinating re-entry into the home schools and making follow-up checks on student status 12 weeks after exiting Rice are also part of their duties.

Counseling. Project Specialists meet with students frequently on a one-to-one basis. Counselor call slips are available in each classroom. At the beginning of class, students who want to meet with their counselor fill out a call slip and give it to the teacher, who turns it in to the office along with attendance at the beginning of the period.

Counselors can then call students out of class that same period, schedules permitting. Students can also sign up any time on the appointment sheets taped to their Project Specialist's door. Home visits are made as needed. Discipline referrals are monitored on an on-going basis in an effort to improve student behavior. This year, selected students met occasionally in small-group counseling sessions to discuss problems and explore alternative, more effective, modes of communication with their peers and with teachers. Teaching new sets of coping skills is also stressed.

Contacts with the Juvenile Justice System. Project Specialists work with their students' parole officers and social workers as needed to reduce disruptive and criminal behavior. Breaking the cycle of recidivism is a central concern here. This year, 37 Rice students entered Gardner House during their semester at Rice, and another 43 reported contact with the juvenile justice system prior to their assignment to Rice (see Figures 7 and 19). (These self-reported numbers are likely understimates.)

FIGURE 7
Contact With Juvenile Justice System



Inservice Training. For the second year in a row, the Project Specialists received no inservice training at the beginning of the school year because of late funding of the TEA grant. The inservice training they received during the year consisted of training available to all District counselors; it was not geared specifically to their work with high-risk students. Project Specialists would like to receive inservice training on the following topics:

- Conflict resolution,
- Addictive disorders,
- Conduct disorder,
- Emotional disturbance,
- Stress reduction,
- Awareness of cultural differences.

REFERRALS TO COMMUNITY AGENCIES

Project Specialists referred 349 students and their families to other community agencies for assistance. This year, they referred to 33 agencies, 2 more than last year. The agencies are listed in Figure 8.

FIGURE 8
Community Agencies Utilized by SCGC

Austin Area Urban League
Austin Child Guidance and Evaluation Center
Austin Community College
Austin Dental Clinic
Austin Police Department - Victim Services
Austin Police Department - Hispanic Crimes Unit
Austin State Hospital
CARITAS
Center for the Development of Education & Nutrition
Center for Battered Women
Charter Lane Hospital
Child and Family Services
Children's Protective Services, Dept. of Human Services
Christian Social Mission
Community Advocates for Teens and Parents
Creative Rapid Learning Center
Delinquency Prevention Division, Juvenile Court
Faulkner Center
Gary Job Corps
Huston-Tillotson College
Mental Health-Mental Retardation
Pebble Project, Child Abuse Center
Planned Parenthood of Austin
Rape Crisis Center
Reproductive Services
S. E. R. - Jobs for Progress
South Austin Youth Services
Spectrum Emergency Shelter
St. Edward's Job Fair
State of Texas Department of Health
Travis County Health Department
Youth Advocacy Program
Youth Employment Services

PROBLEMS/SUGGESTIONS

The following information is based on interviews with Project Specialists and the School Psychologist at Rice.

Gangs. An increase in referrals for gang-related activities was noted. Referrals for vandalism and weapons accounted for a larger percentage of offenses this year than last. Although these same students may well have been referred to Rice for behavior problems in the absence of gangs, this emerging problem has impacted school climate in subtle as well as overt ways. Marking of property in gang styles, called "tagging," is a constant problem. Staff also notes an increase in low-level disruptive behavior, as gang members from neighborhoods all around the city are concentrated at Rice. The increased time spent on counseling and disciplining students about gang-related activities this year dilutes the amount of time spent educating them. Recommendations for dealing with this problem begin by emphasizing that the District must first recognize the problem; this is the first step toward informed discussion of possible solutions. Second, because gangs are a community problem, schools cannot solve the problem alone. Rice stresses an accountability model with students, and the staff recommends that the community do so with parents.

Orientation. New-student orientation, which usually takes place five mornings each week, consumes a substantial amount of time. Orientation was added to their duties this year. They suggest this duty could instead be filled by adding an AISD clerk position, freeing this time for individual counseling sessions.

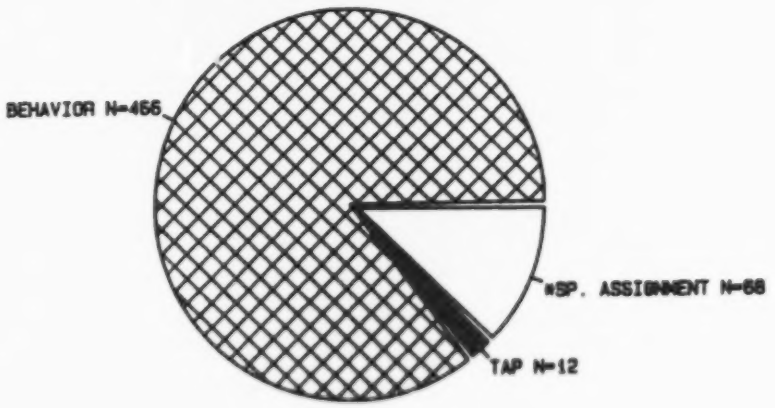
Families. Project Specialists report they have observed enrollment patterns that tend to encompass members of nuclear and extended families. They report counseling sets of brothers, sisters, cousins, and half-siblings. Some of these students may be enrolled concurrently, while others may enroll a year or two later. In their view, this trend points to dysfunctional family patterns in the community.

Grant Funding. Staff would like to see the program funded as a multi-year grant rather than year-to-year. This would allow program and personnel planning on a longer term basis. In addition, Project Specialists would like to see their salaries increased to a level commensurate with that of AISD counselors because they believe their duties are similar. Finally, staff would encourage the District to do whatever possible to fund SCGC Project Specialists to attend August faculty training workshops.

RICE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Most, but not all, students attending Rice are part of the SCGC program. Students in the Transitional Academic Program (TAP), for example, are behind academically and are referred to Rice to concentrate on academic work, whereas SCGC students--the majority of enrollees--are referred for disciplinary reasons. This year, 546 students attended Rice and 466 of them were SCGC participants (see Figure 9).

FIGURE 9
Rice Referral Reasons



* Special Assignment: school or parent request

According to TEA criteria, 68% (N=369) of Rice students are considered at risk of dropping out (Frazer, 1989). The most common sets of characteristics which put these students at risk are:

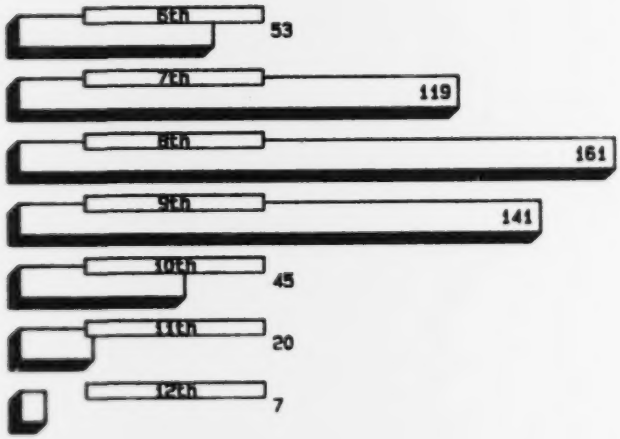
1. Two or more years below grade level on mathematics or reading achievement tests,
2. Age (two or more years older than expected for grade) and TEAMS scores,
3. Failing any two TEAMS tests, and
4. Age; low mathematics or reading achievement; and failing any TEAMS subtest.

This contrasts sharply with the 46% considered at risk in these grades districtwide. Project Specialists report that Rice students bring with them a variety of risk factors -- low income, lack of motivation, family problems, behavior problems, delinquency, low self-esteem, chronic truancy, low achievement, lack of coping skills -- that interfere with their participation in the regular school environment. The alternative education program at Rice provides one means of addressing the needs of these students through the schools. It does so on two levels: 1) academic, and 2) behavior.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The faculty at Rice provide "no-frills" instruction in core academic subjects. A lack of academic progress characterizes many of these students; many are overage for their grade and have a history of retention. There are no sports teams, no music programs, no extracurricular activities at Rice. Enrollment in a study skills class is required for students at low reading levels. A business course is the only elective available. TEAMS tests are administered according to the regular District schedule. Special education classes are provided for those with Individual Education Plans (IEP), but there are no formal classes for students with limited English proficiency. The school day at Rice begins at 10:20 and ends at 4:15. Most students enroll in six classes. Because they serve a select population, classes here are small; some may have had as few as three or four students at the beginning of a semester, but the average class size increased to 20 as more students were referred. Figure 10 presents Rice enrollment by grade. About three out of ten (N=161) Rice students were eighth graders.

FIGURE 10
Rice Enrollment by Grade



Assignments are often individualized; students work on materials from their own packets, kept in the classroom. Textbooks are handed out at the beginning of class and collected at the end. The intent is to teach courses matched in both content and pace to those at the students' home schools. This presents challenges to the teaching staff.

TEAMS Results. At both the seventh and ninth grade levels, the fewest Rice students mastered writing and the largest number mastered reading. Mastery in both areas was much lower than that for AISD overall. Almost half (45%) of the students failed all three tests (see Figure 11). A stronger TEAMS emphasis might help students' graduation prospects.

FIGURE 11
TEAMS Mastery

	Percentage Mastering Subtest			
	Grade 7		Grade 9	
	Rice	District	Rice	District
Mathematics	33%	85%	23%	79%
Reading	38%	83%	50%	83%
Writing	19%	75%	17%	64%
Passed All	14%	67%	8%	56%

Rice 7th Grade: 22 students

- 3 students (14%) passed all tests taken,
- 3 students (14%) failed one test only,
- 6 students (27%) failed two tests, and
- 10 students (45%) failed all three tests.

Rice 9th Grade: 13 students

- 1 student (8%) passed all tests taken,
- 4 students (31%) failed one test only,
- 2 students (15%) failed two tests, and
- 6 students (46%) failed all three tests.

Faculty. Faculty are assigned to Rice in accordance with regular District procedures. The Office of Staff Personnel reports that few teachers request assignment to Rice; in May, there were two such requests on file. Campus teacher turnover is high. For example, 7 of the 15 faculty (47%) on the staff the first day of school this year were new to Rice, compared to a District median of 11.5% for other high schools. New teachers receive no special training to prepare them for working with the behavior problem population that predominates at Rice, nor do they receive a salary bonus. Research on teacher burnout (Dworkin, 1985) finds that schools reporting high teacher turnover rates produced lower levels of achievement than schools with low turnover.

BEHAVIOR

Because the predominant reason for assignment to Rice is behavior problems, both faculty and staff devote considerable attention to fostering school-appropriate behaviors both in and out of the classroom. A copy of the school's Code of Conduct, for example, is posted in each room. Program Specialists work with students on a one-to-one and small group basis, addressing personal, academic, and vocational concerns. Both in the classroom, as well as at lunch and before and after school, the staff emphasize student awareness of responsibility, citizenship, decision-making, communication, and coping skills to encourage appropriate behavior. In most classrooms, there is a chair at the side of the room where students can go voluntarily, or be directed, to "cool down" or refocus their attention when they find it difficult to stay on task. When the bell rings at the start of class, teachers lock their classroom doors; tardy students must knock to be admitted.

Referral Reasons. Students are referred to Rice for a wide variety of behavior problems, ranging from truancy to carrying a weapon to sexual acting out (see Figure 12). Most students are referred for more than one reason. Rates of referral in several behavior categories increased compared to last year; those showing the largest increases include possession of weapons, insubordination, vandalism, and truancy. These increases coincide with the rise of gangs noted by staff this year (see page 8). There were fewer referrals for tardiness and detention violations this year, in keeping with policy that schools should try to handle these more routine problems themselves.

FIGURE 12
Discipline Referral Reasons

	FREQUENCY				
REFERRAL REASON	1987-8		1988-9		CHANGE
Insubordination	216	32%	229	42%	+
Fighting	191	28%	136	25%	-
Truancy	120	18%	129	24%	+
Obscene language	103	15%	80	15%	0
Assault	74	11%	42	8%	-
Detention (missed/excessive)	93	14%	44	8%	-
Theft	39	6%	38	7%	+
Drugs/alcohol offenses	50	7%	36	7%	0
Possession/use of weapons	25	4%	34	6%	+
Vandalism	18	3%	28	5%	+
Excessive tardiness	101	15%	33	6%	-
Sexual misconduct	3	.4%	15	3%	+
Arson	7	1%	2	.4%	-
	(N=685)		(N=546)		

Note: Individual students may be counted more than once.

INNOVATIONS

Facility. Last year, students in the Middle School (grades 6-8) and High School (grades 9-12) were housed at separate facilities several miles apart. That situation impeded coordination and communication among staff members and forced allocation of scarce resources that could otherwise have been shared. In order to ameliorate the situation, the two schools were combined this year on one campus.

Assemblies. An awards assembly was held at the end of each six-week grading period to recognize students with perfect attendance and honor roll grades. A member of the AISD School Board handed out certificates in October to the first group of winners.

Adopt-A-Kid. Project Specialists encouraged faculty and staff informally to "adopt" several students each and get to know them on a more personal level. The focus of this particular innovation is to provide a hefty dose of positive student-teacher interactions outside the classroom for students who have, by and large, found such interactions to be negative in the past.

Code of Conduct. This year, the faculty adopted a school-wide Code of Conduct for all students. A copy was posted in each classroom.

Homework. This year, students in most classes were assigned homework three times a week. Last year, no homework was assigned; instead, work was completed during a study period in each class.

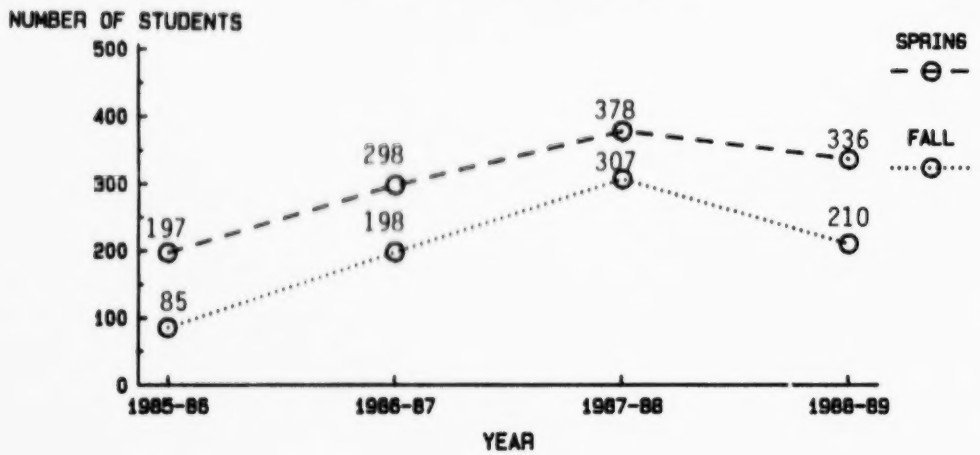
All Stars Game. At the end of the fall semester, boys from the high school athletics class formed a basketball team, the Rice All Stars, and challenged the Austin Police Department All Stars to a game. The student body and faculty turned out to cheer.

Art Program. Through the counseling program this year, a group of students was able to work with an Austin artist who volunteered his time to instruct them. The point of this program was to channel students' creativity along constructive paths. Instead of adding to the graffiti on neighborhood walls and walks, this group of students, many of them gang members, met on weekends to whitewash walls and paint murals. They also painted panels of school mascots for their home campuses.

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

Figure 13 shows Rice enrollment by semester from 1985-86 through 1988-89. Most students attend Rice only during the fall or spring. Students who enroll the last six weeks of a semester and stay on the following semester or who are referred again to Rice after returning to their home school are counted both semesters (because they are served both semesters). In 1988-89, for example, 476 individual students were enrolled in Rice--70 were enrolled during parts of both semesters.

FIGURE 13
Rice Enrollment Trends
1985-86 through 1988-89



The following enrollment trends are evident:

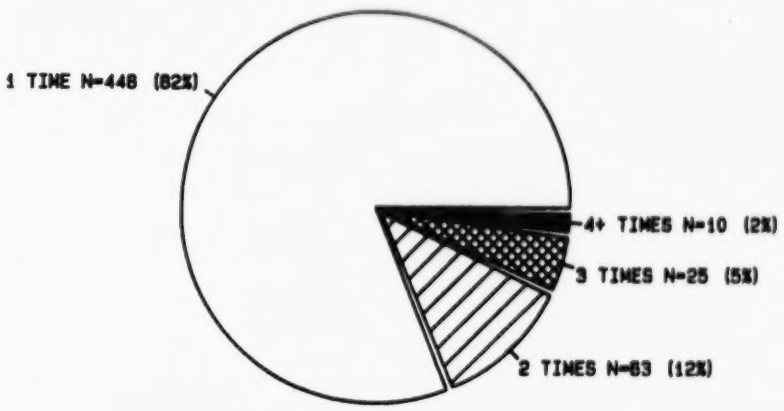
- Enrollment at Rice increased each of the first three years of operation and declined somewhat this year (during both the fall and spring semesters). Enrollment increases may be attributable to greater AISD staff awareness over time of the alternative program. This year's decline may be because schools were encouraged by the administration to handle routine disciplinary actions themselves this year, rather than quickly referring students to Rice.

- Spring enrollment is regularly higher than fall enrollment. This trend may be because: 1) students have accumulated enough disciplinary referrals by spring to qualify them for Rice, or 2) disruptive behavior generally tends to increase in the spring.

Figure 14 illustrates the number of times those served in 1988-89 at Rice had been referred.

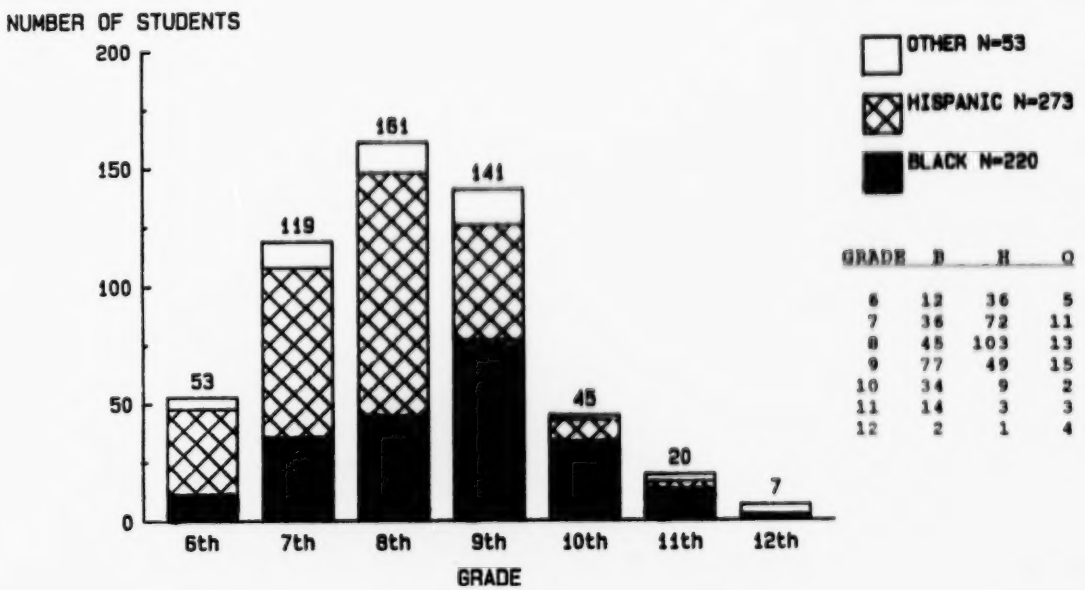
About one in five students (19%) at Rice in 1988-89 had been there before--either in previous years or in fall and spring of 1988-89 (see Figure 14).

FIGURE 14
Repeat Referrals to Rice, 1988-89



Minority student populations show distinctive patterns of enrollment. Hispanic referrals are highest in grade 8, while Black enrollment peaks in grade 9 (see Figure 15).

FIGURE 15
Rice Enrollment by Grade and Ethnicity, 1988-89



GRADE	B	H	O
6	12	36	5
7	36	72	11
8	45	103	13
9	77	49	15
10	34	9	2
11	14	3	3
12	2	1	4

HOME SCHOOLS

Students came to Rice from all of the District's 11 high schools and 13 junior high and middle schools. Figure 16 lists their home schools in order by number of referrals. Porter and Pearce, both middle schools, top the list this year; they were also the top two last year. As shown, the percentage of those enrolled who are referred also varies by school, with Pearce (5%) and O'Henry (4.1%) referring the highest percentage of their own enrollment and Bowie (0.3%) and Dobie (0.5%) the lowest percentage.

FIGURE 16
Home Schools of Rice Students, 1988-89

School (membership)	# to Rice	% of School	% of Rice
Pearce (876)	44	5.0%	8.0%
Porter (1,089)	41	3.8%	7.5%
Murchison (1,032)	40	3.9%	7.3%
LBJ (1,345)	35	2.6%	6.4%
Mendez (1,063)	33	3.0%	6.0%
Johnston (1,558)	33	2.1%	6.0%
Lanier (1,453)	31	2.0%	5.7%
O'Henry (755)	31	4.1%	5.7%
Martin (689)	24	3.5%	4.4%
McCallum (1,371)	24	1.8%	4.4%
Lamar (827)	22	2.7%	4.0%
Crockett (1,800)	22	1.2%	4.0%
Burnet (942)	21	2.2%	3.8%
Bedichek (1,030)	20	1.9%	3.7%
Reagan (1,435)	19	1.3%	3.5%
Austin (1,831)	19	1.0%	3.5%
Fulmore (859)	13	1.5%	2.4%
Travis (1,354)	13	1.0%	2.4%
Covington (1,242)	10	0.8%	1.8%
Anderson (1,416)	9	0.6%	1.6%
Robbins (215)	8	3.7%	1.5%
Kealing (698)	8	1.1%	1.5%
Bowie (1,867)	5	0.3%	0.9%
Dobie (850)	4	0.5%	0.7%

Based on TEA fall, 1988, membership count.

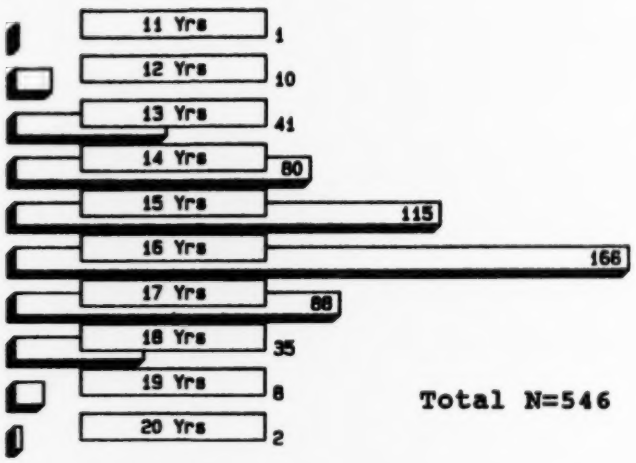
Continuing TAP students and those from TYC are not included on this list.

RICE STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

As noted earlier, SCGC includes most (N=466), but not all, of the 546 Rice students. A brief profile of all Rice students reveals the following points:

- **Age.** The most common age of Rice students was 16, though the range extended from 11 to 20 years of age. See Figure 17.

FIGURE 17
Rice Enrollment by Age



- **Gender.** Males accounted for 79% (N=434) of Rice enrollment; only 21% (N=112) were female.

- **Ethnicity.** Ninety percent (N=493) of Rice students were minority, either Black or Hispanic. The percentage breakdown was as follows: Hispanic 50% (N=273); Black 40% (N=220); Other 10% (N=53).

- **Special Education Status.** Districtwide, 8.5% of AISD secondary students were enrolled in Special Education classes this year. At Rice, the percentage was 14.7% (N=80).

- **Previous Assignments.** This year, 74% (N=405) of the students were assigned to Rice for the first time, while 26% (N=141) were repeaters.

- **Low Income Status.** Over two thirds (71%, N=387) of Rice students are low income (either they or their siblings qualify for free or reduced-price lunches).

STUDENT OPINIONS ABOUT RICE

A random sample of Rice High School students (N=21) (about one third of the enrollment at that time) was surveyed in fall, 1988, as part of the districtwide student survey. Students were asked to what extent they agreed with these statements:

"I want to stay another semester at Rice."

Results: Most (71%) of the students disagreed with this statement. More than half (57%) disagreed strongly. Only 10% agreed.

"My behavior is better than last year now that I am at Rice."

Results: Over half (62%) of the students agreed that their behavior has improved at Rice, with 29% neutral and 10% disagreeing.

"I feel more confident about staying in school through graduation now that I am at Rice."

Results: Three fourths (75%) of the respondents agreed with the statement; only one student (5%) disagreed.

"Compared to my home school, counselors at Rice pay more attention to me as a person."

Results: Responses to this statement were more evenly divided than responses to other questions. An equal number of students (14%) agreed strongly and disagreed strongly. Overall, however, 43% agreed and 29% disagreed with the statement, with 29% neutral.

"Teachers at Rice have helped me to improve my grades."

Results: Three in four (76%) of the students agreed with the statement, while only 10% disagreed.

Results of the high school student survey indicate that, in general, the SCGC Program is having a beneficial impact on these high-risk students' attitudes. By a large margin, they report that both their behavior and their grades improved during their reassignment to Rice. Over half the respondents reported that they liked the personal attention of the SCGC Project Specialists. Overall, students prefer to return to their home schools rather than remain another semester at Rice, despite statistical trends showing that their grades tend to drop, and they tend to drop out in greater numbers, at their home schools compared to Rice. Assignment to Rice may well be "strong medicine" for these

students; they may also wish to avoid the stigma attached to enrollment there.

The most hopeful finding, perhaps, is that 75% of the students report that assignment to Rice has made them more confident about staying in school, a tribute to the dropout prevention efforts of the Rice Project Specialists and faculty.

STAFF OPINIONS ABOUT RICE

A random sample of District employees (secondary teachers, campus professionals and campus administrators) was surveyed in spring, 1989. Valid return rates varied from 92% to 67%. Recipients were asked to what extent they agreed with these statements about Rice:

"The program at Rice was beneficial in preparing students to return to our campus." N=255

Results: Responses were evenly split, with about one fourth each agreeing and disagreeing, while another fourth was neutral, and the remaining fourth did not know.

"Students who have returned to this campus from Rice are less disruptive now than they were before their reassignment." N=281

Results: Over half (55%) of the respondents were either neutral or did not know. More disagreed (29%) than agreed (16%) with this statement.

"Students who have returned to this campus from Rice have a more positive outlook about self and school now than before they went." N=268

Results: About twice as many respondents disagreed with this statement (31%) as agreed with it (15%). Over half (55%) were either neutral or did not know.

The survey also asked: "What special attention or services are you providing to Rice students entering your campus spring semester?" N of responses = 499

Thirteen percent reported providing students with a special orientation session, while 10% reported extra individual counseling. Seventeen percent reported no Rice students. The remaining 40% of responses were scattered among these options: tour of school, discussion at faculty meeting, lunch with the students, group counseling, unique course assignment, classes with other Rice students, adult mentor, coordinated vocational and academic education, community in schools program, PAL, and WINGS.

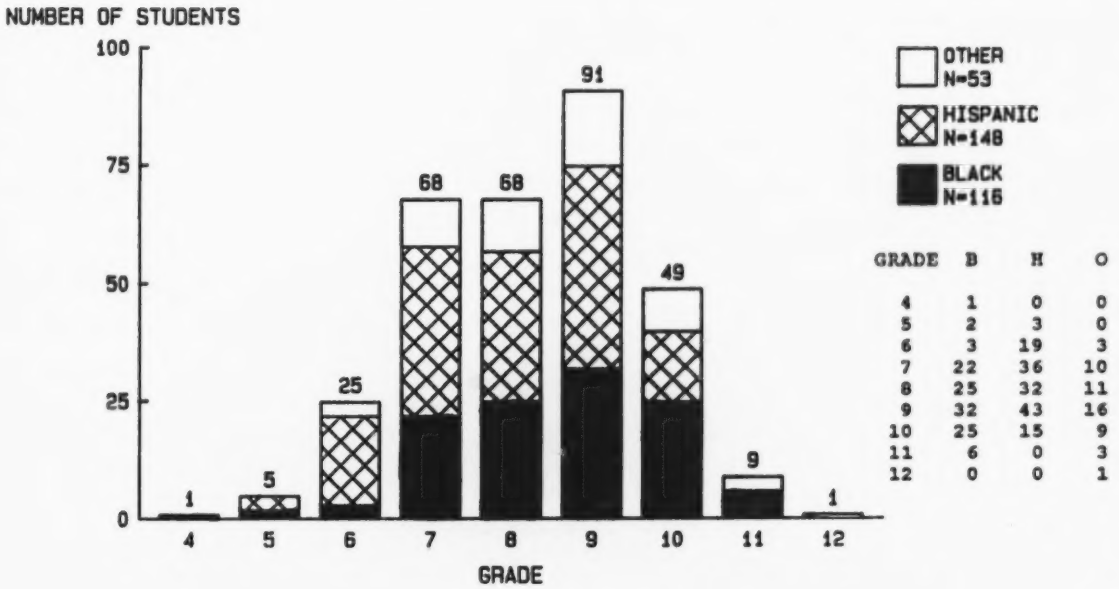
GARDNER HOUSE

The Travis County Juvenile Detention Center, Gardner House, was located this year and last in temporary quarters on the Austin State Hospital grounds. Juvenile offenders detained by the courts stay there while awaiting a court hearing. Afterward, depending on the outcome of their case, some may remain for varying lengths of time while others are released usually to the custody of their parents or on parole. During the 1988-89 school year, the shortest stay was 1 day, the longest 90 days, and the average 5.2 days. For security reasons, not all juveniles can be held at this temporary facility, so some are sent elsewhere, thus artificially deflating the number served for 1988-89. The new facility is scheduled to open during the fall of 1989.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The SCGC Program at Gardner House provides the opportunity for continuity of school enrollment for delinquent AISD students. See Figure 18 for enrollment by grade and ethnicity. In order to receive credit, District students can accumulate no more than five unexcused absences per semester.

FIGURE 18
AISD Students at Gardner House
Frequency by Grade and Ethnicity



GRADE	B	H	O
4	1	0	0
5	2	3	0
6	3	19	3
7	22	36	10
8	25	32	11
9	32	43	16
10	25	15	9
11	6	0	3
12	0	0	1

By placing a certified AISD teacher at Gardner House to implement an educational program, SCGC makes it possible for students to receive attendance credit if they participate in the classes. When students are detained for two weeks or more, or if they express an interest in keeping up with assignments from their home schools, the Project Specialist can request a copy of the students' course work. Individual lesson plans are made for advanced students and those far behind the rest of the group. More than half the students (N=317, 57%) this year were enrolled in AISD. Another 106 (19%) of detainees reported enrollment in other school districts, and 138 (25%) were dropouts. This year for the first time, many AISD textbooks are available for use at Gardner House. Overall, however, detention is a stressful time for the students, and many are not capable of completing usual amounts of coursework.

Career Education. Easy-to-read materials are available to students interested in learning about vocational choices. Periodically, a series of guest speakers discuss their occupations and the prerequisite training.

Life Skills. A program of films, discussions, and guest speakers from the community supplement the instructional program. Topics include family and financial planning, mental and physical health, and adolescent growth and development.

Recreation. Recreational activities are organized for the students. Because of facility security restrictions at the temporary site, outdoor activities are limited.

Arts and Crafts. Materials are available for students to express themselves creatively. These times also provide the opportunity for discussion of feelings in a nonthreatening atmosphere. In December, for example, the students sewed and stuffed teddy bears as their contribution to the Austin Police Department's Blue Santa Program, which donates gifts to disadvantaged children.

PROBLEMS/SUGGESTIONS

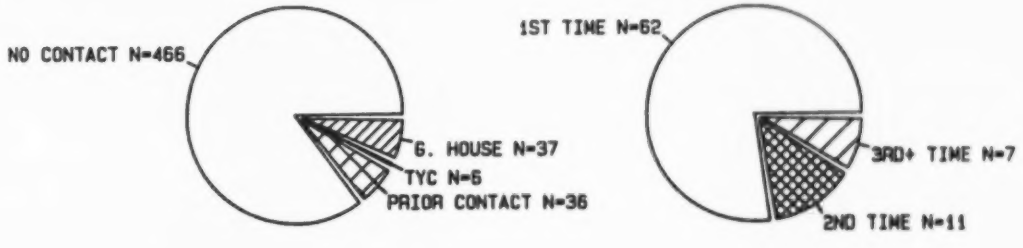
Gardner House enrollment this year (N=561) increased 12% over last year (N=501), boosting the student-teacher ratio to 17:1. This ratio would be even higher if all juveniles detained had been held at the temporary facility; many were sent elsewhere for security reasons. According to the Standards for Juvenile Detention Facilities published by the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission, "When education services are provided in the detention facility, it is recommended that teacher student ratios not exceed one to ten...". The hiring of a second teacher to work at Gardner House would lower the ratio and increase the supervision available.

OFFENSES

Students were referred to SCGC at Gardner House for committing one or more of a wide variety of offenses. Some occurred while students were in school; most did not. SCGC is intended to help teenagers avoid contact with the court system, which means the delinquent behaviors leading to detention and prosecution must be addressed.

Rice Students at Gardner House. Some Rice students were referred to Gardner House because of contact with juvenile justice authorities (see Figure 19). During the school year, a total of 37 (8%, unduplicated count) Rice students entered Gardner House during their semester of enrollment at Rice. Most of the Rice students were held for burglary (N=16), violation of a court order or warrant (N=9), drugs (N=7) or assault with injury (N=6). Six students were referred to Rice by the Texas Youth Commission as a condition of probation. In addition to thesef, 37 Rice students reported contact with Gardner House prior to their semester of enrollment for a total of 80 (15%) of Rice students with a history of contact with the Travis County juvenile justice system. (The numbers of self-reported prior contact are likely underreported.)

FIGURE 19
Rice Students at Gardner House



CONTACT WITH COURT SYSTEM
ALL RICE STUDENTS N=546

NUMBER OF ASSIGNMENTS TO RICE
FOR CONTACT GROUP N=80

Recidivism. For all of the 561 offenders held at Gardner House during the 1988-89 school year, the recidivism rate was as follows:

- 399 (71%) entered for the first time
- 119 (21%) entered for the second time
- 43 (8%) entered for the third through seventh time.

23

Figure 20 shows the frequencies of offenses, by category, for delinquents detained at Gardner House. Burglaries, runaways, and violation of court orders were the most common. Some delinquents were referred for multiple reasons.

FIGURE 20
Gardner House: Offenses by Frequency

OFFENSE	TOTAL FREQUENCY	RICE STUDENTS
Burglary	153	13
Burglary of vehicle	46	3
Robbery	9	4
Aggravated robbery	16	1
Theft	60	4
Unauthorized use of vehicle	59	
Criminal mischief	30	3
Criminal trespass	8	3
Possession of a controlled substance	28	5
Inhalant abuse	3	2
Murder/manslaughter	4	
Assault on school official	13	
Assault with injury	30	6
Aggravated assault	31	1
Sexual assault	4	
Weapons violations	21	5
Terroristic threat	0	
Runaway	73	1
Harboring a runaway	1	1
Escape/evading custody	9	
Parole violation	19	
Violation of a court appearance	79	7
Warrant failure to appear	10	2
Temporary detention/not yet charged	29	2

Note: Individual students may be counted more than once.

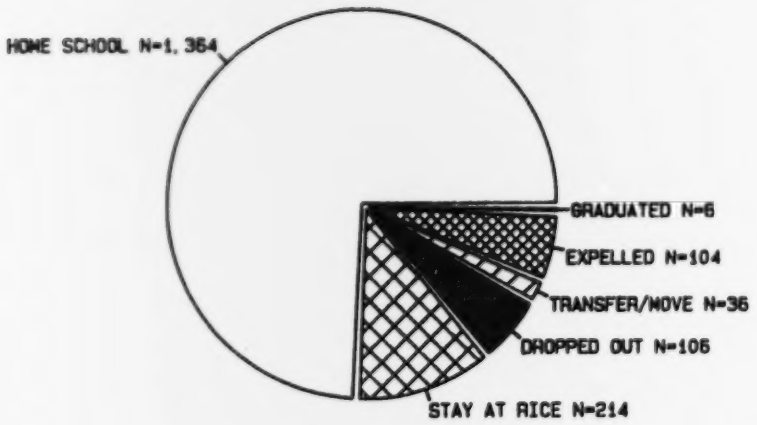
PROGRAM FOLLOW-UP

END-OF-SEMESTER DISPOSITIONS

The status of Rice students at exit has been gathered now for seven semesters. Figure 21 shows the status of all Rice students at the end of their semester of enrollment. It is noteworthy that 75% of them (N=1,364) were exited to their home schools, and equal percentages (6% each) were expelled and dropped out while at Rice. Another 12% stayed at Rice for the following semester.

Looking at 1988-89 data only, the dropout rate at exit was 10% (more than four times higher than last year's 2.2%) and the expulsion rate was 9% (double last year's 4.4% rate).

FIGURE 21
End-of-Semester Dispositions
Rice Students 1984-89



N=1,830

TWELVE-WEEK FOLLOW-UP

For evaluation purposes, TEA requires grant recipients to provide information on student attendance and grades during and after enrollment in SCGC at Rice. Specifically, TEA requests data on students who meet these criteria:

- Attending Rice for the first time.
- Reassigned to their home school at the end of the semester.
- Still in school 12 weeks later.

During the current school year, 119 students from spring semester, 1988, met these criteria, and 74 students from the fall semester, 1988. (Follow-up data on students enrolled in SCGC in spring, 1989, will be available 12 weeks into the fall semester, 1989.) Figure 22 shows 12-week follow-up data. The average attendance rate for each student for the semester of assignment to Rice was computed and compared with the average attendance rate for the 12 weeks following return to the home campus. An improvement of five days or more was considered "better," a decline of more than five days was considered "worse," and changes less than that amount were considered "no change." For grades, the average number of credits earned was contrasted for the semester of assignment and the 12-week follow-up period. An increase in the average number of credits earned was "better," a decline was "worse," and the same number was "no change." Trends are inconclusive. Attendance was up in the spring and down in the fall, while grades showed movement in the opposite direction.

FIGURE 22
TEA 12-Week Follow-Up

ATTENDANCE

	Spring, 1988 N=119	Fall, 1988 N=74
Better	51	11
No Change	41	13
Worse	26	34
Incomplete Records	1	16

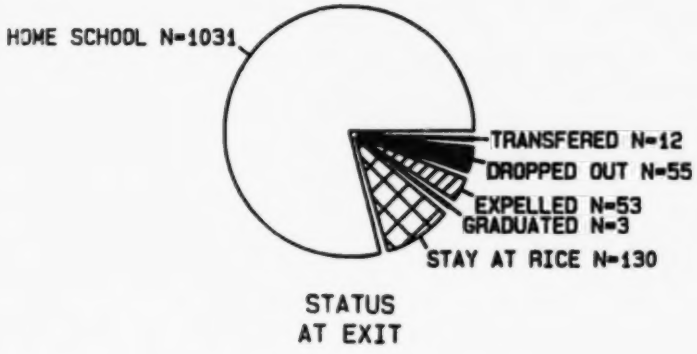
GRADES

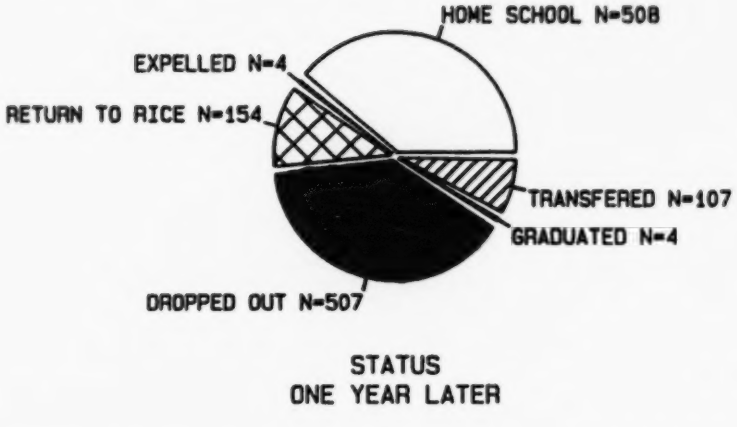
	Spring, 1988 N=119	Fall, 1988 N=74
Better	31	36
No Change	26	14
Worse	60	13
Incomplete Records	2	11

ONE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Figure 23 shows both the exit status of 1,284 Rice students enrolled from spring, 1986, through spring, 1988, and the status of these same students one year later. By this point, the percentage of students attending their home schools (40%, N=508) was the same as the percentage that had dropped out (40%, N=507). Recidivists accounted for 12%, and transfers 8%.

FIGURE 23
One-Year Follow-Up
Rice Students Enrolled Spring, 1986 - Spring, 1988





Because there is no control population of students with behavior problems who are allowed to remain at their home schools in lieu of assignment to Rice, no firm conclusions can be drawn regarding whether students fare better in terms of improved behavior and staying in school by being sent to Rice.

COSTS

The School-Community Guidance Center (SCGC) program at Rice and Gardner House was funded by a $100,000 grant from the Texas Education Agency under the authority of Article III, House Bill 20, Appropriations Bill of the 70th Texas Legislature. The budget for the 1988-89 school year was divided as follows: $20,688 for Gardner House, $54,704 for Rice, $13,269 for evaluation, and $8,409 for summer school.

Gardner House served a large number of students (561) for a short period of time (average detention of 5.2 days), while Rice's 466 SCGC students generally stayed until the end of the semester of enrollment. The cost per student was $37 at Gardner House and $117 at Rice. (The number of students served in summer school is not yet available.)

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